

Message Text

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PAGE 01 RANGOO 00452 100959Z

15

ACTION OES-05

INFO OCT-01 EA-07 ISO-00 IO-11 SS-15 NSC-05 AID-05 HEW-02

SP-02 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 EB-07 DODE-00 AGR-05

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R 100908Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 966

C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 0452

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SPOP, BM

SUBJECT: IMPLICATION OF BURMA'S POPULATION GROWTH

REF: STATE 301427

1. SUMMARY OF EMBASSY'S REPLY TO REFTEL GIVEN BELOW. FULL REPORT BEING POUCHED.

2. THE GUB TRADITIONALLY HAS HAD A NEGATIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD POPULATION CONTROL, BUT THIS POLICY MAY BE UNDERGOING SOME FORM OF RECONSIDERATION. THIS TRADITIONAL ATTITUDE HAS BEEN PARTLY FOSTERED BY BURMA'S GEOGRAPHIC SITUATION AS THE COUNTRY BORDERS ON THREE VERY POPULOUS STATES. THE GUB IS FEARFUL OF ILLEGAL POPULATION ENCROACHMENT FROM THESE STATES SHOULD BURMA REMAIN RELATIVELY UNDERPOPULATED. BURMA'S POPULATION GROWTH IS PRESENTLY OUTPACING ITS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. THE COUNTRY MAY SOON CEASE TO BE A NET RICE EXPORTER AND COULD FACE SERIOUS FOOD SHORTAGES AND LOSS OF FOREIGN EXCHANGE EARNINGS. THERE IS SOME EVIDENCE THAT THE GUB IS BEGINNING TO SLOWLY SHIFT TOWARD A MORE POSITIVE POSTURE ON POPULATION CONTROL, BUT ANY BILATERAL ATTEMPT BY THE U.S. TO PROMOTE THIS AS YET FEEBLE MOVEMENT WOULD LIKELY ASSURE ITS IMMEDIATE DEMISE. OUR BEST HOPE TO ENCOURAGE A POPULATION CONTROL PROGRAM IN BURMA IS TO WORK THROUGH MULTILATERAL AGENCIES. OSBORN

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Margaret P. Grafeld
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